

my hands have been broken one too many times by jakepurralta

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Summary:

Jonathan packed his bags and left for NYU. Nancy left as well, but in the opposite direction, to Stanford. They got their degrees, found jobs, and lived their lives away from each other, their monster hunter days long since left behind.

Chapter one: He wonders if she still thinks about him after all this time. She does.

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Author's Note:

People on Tumblr have been torturing me for WEEKS with this "15 years later" au featuring Emmy Rossum and Norman Reedus as Nancy and Jonathan, respectively. I've been sitting here, waiting, ever since. Waiting for someone to give me those perfect gifsets in gif form. Telling myself I'm not good enough, someone who can genuinely write will take a shot at this, and the shot will be exquisite.

Well, I grew tired of waiting.

Shoutout to youffievalentine for providing me with lots of ideas to work with! Perhaps with your help I can find the strength to actually finish this.

April 1997

She still thinks about him sometimes.

It happens when she's in the middle of doing something, and ends up with the palm of her left hand facing up. The scar has faded by now. The memory, however, hasn't.

The cold knife pressed against her hand. The adrenaline coursing through her body. His faint voice telling her that she can still back out if she wants to- Her own sharp voice cutting him off, counting down and slicing.

Perhaps it was a little strange to think that after all that has happened, after they'd fought a monster from *another dimension*, she felt a sense of comfort in knowing that Jonathan was walking around with the same scar on his hand. That's messed up, right? Finding solace in scars. But it was like they'd established a connection now, one that didn't need explaining. All they had to do is look at each other and they'd both understand.

But as scars heal and fade, so do feelings, Nancy has come to know.

On the night they said goodbye, "We'll keep in touch," was her solemn promise to him and he'd nodded at that. For the first time in a long time, she noted that his face had turned into an empty canvas that she couldn't read. She hated it. He was pulling up his walls, and she couldn't figure out for the life of her if he nodded because he genuinely believed her, or if he was already half-expecting her to give up on him.

They're standing a few feet away from each other, but it's like he's already slipping from her grasp. Not now. Not *already*. She needed validation. "You'll do the same...won't you?" It came out needier than she'd anticipated, but the vulnerability was already out there between them, so it didn't feel uncomfortable.

Jonathan let his gaze fall to the floor, shifting on his feet, waiting too damn long to give her an answer. Eventually, he looked back up, and that's when she noticed he was quietly holding back tears. His lips were curled up into something that was the beginning of a smile, but his face looked too tired to pull through. "Of course." He waited a beat before adding, "I don't want to lose you."

This was one of the rare times Jonathan was the one to step up and gently pull her in for a hug.

She sighs, slumping back into her sofa. Reaches out for a cigarette. She still has forty minutes for a smoke until she has to pop in a breath mint and head out to pick up Noah.

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He wonders if she ever thinks of him the way he thinks of her, even after all this time. (Nancy Wheeler is not the kind of girl you ever forget.)

"That's stupid. If you miss her, pick up the phone and call her." Steve had declared, still the same self-assured extrovert who managed to slip himself into Jonathan's personal life before Jonathan could even consider the fact that it was quite odd that the guy who once made his high school life a nightmare was now one of his closest friends.

Granted, Steve had matured a lot since then. After he and Nancy had broken up, Steve apparently started to realize that he wanted to get into a good college, focus on his studies and simply do what made him feel good. So that obviously meant ditching his asshole friends, standing up to his obnoxious family and he even ended up settling down with a nice girl. At the time, Steve had tried to ask Jonathan to be his best man, but the two soon realized that photographer was a better fit for him.

Jonathan huffs at the thought of 'simply calling Nancy Wheeler', though there's nobody around to see him. What would he even say? *Hi Nancy, I know we haven't talked in fifteen years, and I don't know what to say, but I really miss you in my life.*

The line echoes in his head and logically speaking, he knows that's actually not half-bad. But because he's Jonathan and he still gets anxious sometimes, his mind instantly drags him into a scenario where she:

a) doesn't remember him. (Okay, this thought is saddening, but they'd fought an *interdimensional monster* together. Doesn't seem very likely that one would forget such an experience. Point: Jonathan. Unless...she suffered some major PTSD-symptoms after that and she'd repressed her memories so much to the point of actual forgetting. Retracting: point Jonathan. Point: anxiety.)

b) has established a life of her own, and therefore has no interest to have him back in hers. (Slightly more plausible. He doesn't even know what she's been up to all these days. She works as an insurance agent. Or at least that's what his mother had told him seven or so months ago, it's possible that the information is now inaccurate. Besides, what can he even offer her at this point? He works in telecommunication and absolutely *dreads* going to work every morning. Sure, he still works as a photographer sometimes, but it's only freelance, and the thing about that is that he only ends up getting paid if the local newspapers like what they see. Which they often don't. So yeah, a very measly income indeed. It's enough to put food on the table for himself and his dog Luna, but not enough to offer Nancy Wheeler all the things she deserves. Point: anxiety.)

Does he even need to think of more reasons? At this point, he's

already fully aware of the fact that he's backpedaling hard as his torturous brain is banging pots and pans together, yelling, "She doesn't need you! She doesn't need you! She's better off without you!" and Jonathan thinks that maybe it's for the best.

Sure, he's living his life paycheck to paycheck, but it's still pretty good.

Sure, his girlfriend of two years dumped him on the night he was ready to propose, but he had felt love again, and that's a good thing.

Can you even be hung up on someone who might just be doomed to forever remain your "what if"? He never told her, but he always knew, deep in his heart, that he loved Nancy and after they lost touch, he honestly thought he'd never love again and he did. That makes him think that he has a chance at happiness without her.

And he sincerely hopes that she's happy without him.

He pulls the camera strap over his head and steps out the door, hoping that this time, the pictures he takes will be enough to earn him some actual money. Luna barks in protest as he begins to shut and lock the door, her quick paws stumbling across the room on the other side until they stop to a halt and she whimpers sadly.